



*An Essex County  
Collection:  
The Water Colors  
of  
Gertrude  
Beals  
Bourne  
1867-1962*

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*An Essex County Collection: The Water Colors  
of  
Gertrude Beals Bourne  
1867–1962*

by Margaret A. Hanni



ESSEX INSTITUTE  
SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS  
1988

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"An Essex County Collection: The Water Colors of Gertrude Beals Bourne 1867-1962" is the title of an exhibition held in the Sharf Gallery at Essex Institute, March 6, 1988-May 1, 1988. Margaret Hanni is a doctoral candidate in art history at Boston University. She organized an exhibition of Gertrude Bourne's work at Simmons College in 1986.

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## Foreword

This exhibition of twenty-five watercolors by Gertrude Beals Bourne marks the first time her works have been shown in Essex County in sixty years. Drawn largely from the collection owned by her son, Philip Bourne of Salem, the exhibition has been organized by guest curator Margaret Hanni to both illuminate the development of her style and to highlight the major themes which interested the artist throughout her long career. The works also document Bourne's thirty years of association with the art community of Essex County.

The county's rich artistic heritage has been of long standing interest to the Essex Institute. Since 1875, the Institute has mounted exhibitions to showcase the works of artists associated with the region. In 1987 this interest led to the formation of an advisory committee on the fine arts in Essex County whose members include art historians, collectors and representatives from other Essex County museums and arts organizations. The committee recommended establishing an archives at the Institute to house information on Essex County artists. Margaret Hanni began this project in the summer of 1987 by

surveying local collections with an eye towards documenting all artists who have worked in the county since mid-17th century. This ongoing project will produce a wealth of information that will serve as a valuable resource to visiting scholars and Institute staff. It has already generated many ideas for further exhibitions, publications, and programs.

March is Women's History month, and the Institute is pleased to be able to contribute to this national observance with this exhibition and publication. The Institute would like to express its deep appreciation to Margaret Hanni for all her varied efforts to organize this exhibition and to write the accompanying catalogue. We also join her in thanking members of the Bourne family for their cooperation and financial support which, together with funds from the Frederic A. and Jean S. Sharf Fine Arts Fund, have made this project possible.

Anne Farnam  
President

Dean Lahikainen  
Chief Curator

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## Acknowledgments

This exhibition is the result of the interest and generosity of many individuals. I would like to express very special thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Philip W. Bourne for initiating and supporting the project, for their willingness to share family stories and papers, and for making the collection of paintings available for study and exhibition. Throughout the last three years, it has been a great pleasure to work with the Bournes.

Pleasure must also be acknowledged in my appreciation of Ms. Jean Reeves, Ms. M.K. Rombout of the Boston Atheneum, and Dr. Alicia Faxon and Mr. Robert Oppenheim of Simmons College, each of whom has contributed much counsel and immensely important good humor, to say nothing of actual work, to the project. I am grateful to the Carter Harrison family for their interest and help in the early stages of cataloguing and photographing the collection and for their assistance with plans for the current exhibition. Mrs. Louette Bourne and her family were especially helpful at the beginning of the project, allowing Mr. Bourne and me to make chaos out of order in the artist's former studio on Beacon Hill. Thanks also to Mr. Robert Brown at Archives of

American Art, Ms. Janice Chadbourne, senior fine arts librarian at the Boston Public Library, and Kathleen Volpe at Brockton Art Museum. In addition, many thanks to the staff of the Essex Institute, for their continued cooperation, encouragement and good humor.

Margaret Hanni, Guest Curator  
Allston, Massachusetts



## *The Watercolors of Gertrude Beals Bourne*

Gertrude Bourne's career exemplifies the achievements of the group of women who chose to become artists during the late nineteenth century in Boston. Bourne and her colleagues are among the first generation of American women who made the distinction between painting as a profession and art study as the hobby of a refined and cultured lady. Necessary to the professional success of these serious painters was the opportunity to exhibit work and to belong to a community of artists in which their work found support. For Bourne and many of her contemporaries, working in Essex County helped fill those needs. Supplying superb subject matter for the landscape painter and opportunities to exhibit and sell work, the county during the teens and twenties supported a very active community of artists with ties to Boston.

Gertrude Beals grew up on Dartmouth Street in Boston's Back Bay. Beginning in the 1880s, she studied art privately, first with Henry Rice and later with Henry B. Snell, one of the founding members of the New York Watercolor Club.<sup>1</sup> Travel constituted an important aspect of Beals' education, and trips with her mother, Edith Ware Simmons Beals, and her



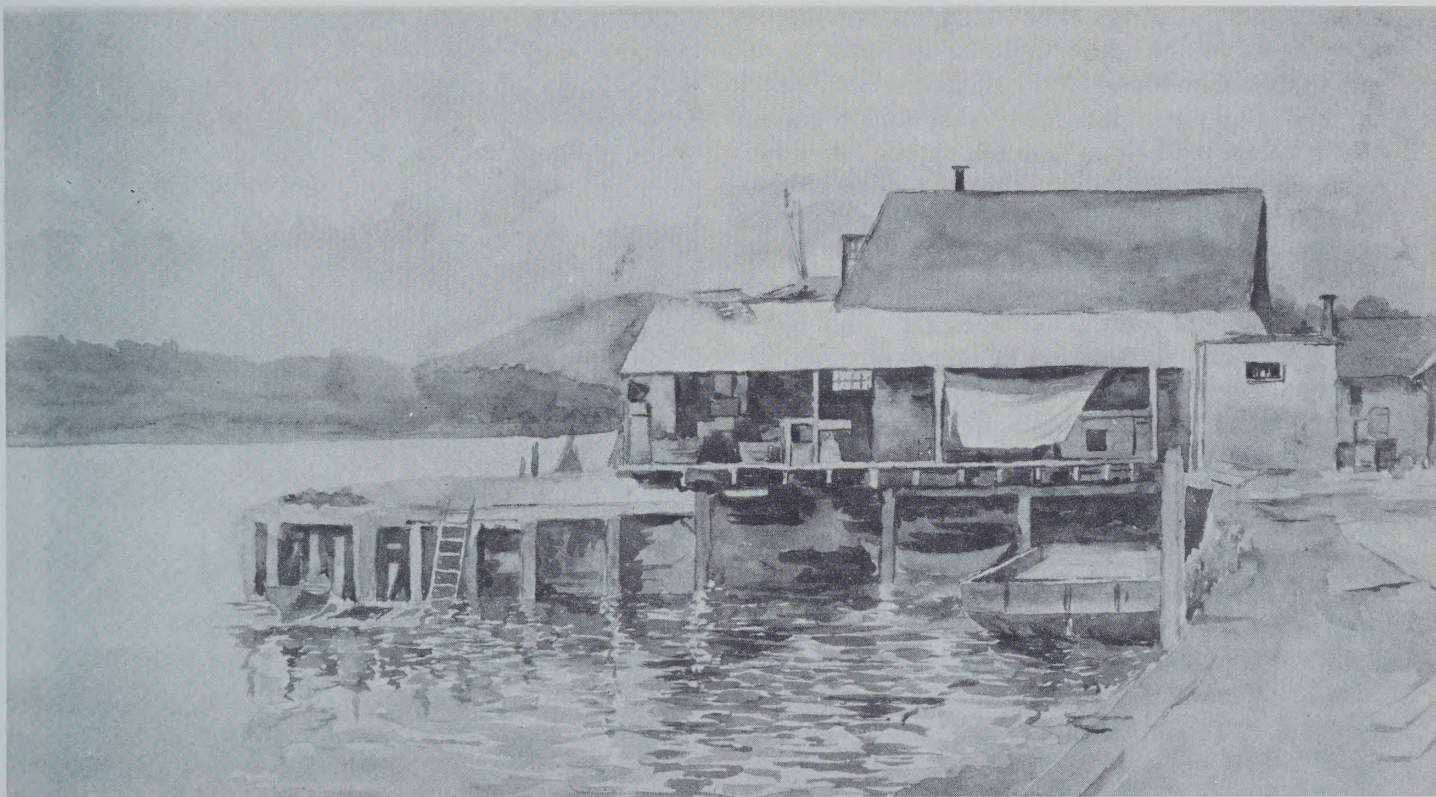
*The artist, ca. 1890*

two brothers, Gardner and Sidney, took her often to Europe, where she painted in Norway, France, and Great Britain during the 1890s.

The same decade records Beals' first watercolors from Essex County where the Beals family had a summer home in Nahant. The small watercolors *Fall Harbor* (cat. no. 4) and *Village across the Water*, (cat. no. 1) typify the style in which Beals painted during the nineties. Her early work emphasizes a carefully observed and controlled rendering of the landscape, utilizing transparent, sometimes delicate washes of color. Even as a young artist, Beals was fascinated by the different weather and atmospheres encountered at the seaside. *Sailboats and Wharf* (cat. no. 3) captures the soft, indistinct quality of a harbor in the fog, while *House on the Water*, (fig. 1) with its skillful use of the unpainted white paper evokes the sharpness of reflections on the water on a bright sunny day. Beals's realism in works from the 1890s allies her stylistically with the American landscape watercolor tradition exemplified by Winslow Homer and Childe Hassam, both of whom exhibited paintings during the 1880s and 1890s at the Boston Art Club, where Beals began her own exhibition career in 1892.

The house rules of the Boston Art Club suggest something of the ironies and difficulties faced by the young woman artist anxious to exhibit her work in Boston in 1890. Though paintings by women were accepted for exhibition and accounted for a sizable proportion of the works listed in the catalogues, women were allowed to attend the exhibitions at the club only when accompanied by a gentlemen member.<sup>2</sup> Thus Gertrude Beals had to make special arrangements in order to view her own work at the club. Women were denied membership privileges until 1912, when the amended rules created a Ladies' Department, with a separate entrance on the side of the building. Once accepted with the proper reference by a male member of the club, a woman might use the Ladies' Department much as the men used the rest of the club, as a place for socializing and entertaining guests. However, the bylaws stated quite explicitly that a lady was not permitted to invite the same gentleman more than once in thirty days.<sup>3</sup> It was not until the early thirties that the Boston Art Club admitted women as full members, though it consistently included their work in group shows and held several special exhibitions consisting of works by women artists.





*Figure 1 House on the Water, ca 1895 (cat. no. 2)*



The paintings that Beals entered in the semiannual exhibitions of watercolors at the Boston Art Club illustrate two of the themes which were to occupy her for her entire sixty year career: gardens and harbors. Works that featured harbor views from her trips to France, Norway, and Bermuda alternated with garden scenes and flower still lifes in the Club's exhibitions during the nineties.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to Homer and Hassam, Maurice Prendergast and John Twachtman regularly contributed work to Boston Art Club exhibitions. The young Gertrude Beals certainly was aware of the watercolor techniques demonstrated by these older and well-established artists. In the late nineties and early years of the next century, Beals's style displayed more freedom in the handling of paint and a more impressionistic rendering of light in the landscape, suggesting the possible influence of Prendergast and Hassam in particular and a general awareness on Beals's part of the formal concerns of Impressionism, which was, at the time, very new to Boston.

Lilla Cabot Perry, a Bostonian artist who had spent several summers at Giverny as Claude Monet's neighbor, introduced his work to Boston in 1889.<sup>5</sup> Though not initially well received, French Impres-



Figure 2. *Street in Ipswich, ca. 1918 (cat. no. 11)*

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sionism eventually had an extremely important aesthetic influence on Boston painters beginning in the 1890s and lasting well into the 1930s.<sup>6</sup> Frank Benson of Salem, William Paxton, Edmund Tarbell, and Philip Leslie Hale are identified with the American Impressionists, and as teachers at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, they exerted considerable artistic influence in the city. Their work combined two elements of French Impressionism—the interest in the translation of light on surfaces into paint on canvas, and the use of highly saturated colors—with a more conservative emphasis on accurate drawing and the modeling of forms. Gertrude Beals, though she never studied with the Boston Impressionists, was certainly exposed to their work, which was exhibited regularly in the city.

A more direct influence on the evolution of Beals's painting style was the work of John Singer Sargent. The Museum of Fine Arts acquired several Sargent watercolors between 1900 and 1910; Gertrude Beals copied these paintings at the museum. Evidence of her study of the expatriate artist's watercolor style is present in her 1905 work, *Purple Azaleas*, (cat. no. 5) with its free and broken brushstroke, vibrant color, layering of washes, and overall, a rather spontaneous

representation of her subject.

In general, the period from 1900 to 1915 seems to have been one of transition for the artist, personally and professionally. In 1904, Beals married architect Frank Bourne, and they moved to the house on Beacon Hill that neighbor Oliver Wendell Holmes had christened "Castle Sunflower" for the ornamental carving that adorned its gable end. There Gertrude Beals Bourne established her studio, which she maintained until her death at age ninety-five. Her paintings from 1905 to 1915 display a range of working methods, probably indicating Bourne's experimentation in pursuit of a personal style. There is no indication that she exhibited work in Boston during the period, at the Boston Art Club or elsewhere, further suggesting that she was in the process of developing or adjusting her style. She may well have been adjusting to family life also, for her son Philip was born in 1907. Around 1911 or 1912, the Bourne family began spending summers in Ipswich, where they rented a house from artist Arthur Wesley Dow.

In Ipswich, and later in Annisquam, Bourne was one among many painters who supported a strong connection between the artistic communities of Boston and Essex County. Frank Benson lived in



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Salem, but taught and maintained a studio in Boston. William Paxton and his wife, Elizabeth, had a summer studio in the Gloucester area, as did Joseph DeCamp, another instructor at the Museum School in Boston. Arthur Wesley Dow and Theodore Wendel both lived in Ipswich and maintained studios in Boston as well. Newburyport resident Laura Coombs Hills maintained her Boston studio and frequently exhibited work in the city.<sup>7</sup> Bourne and Hills were friends as well as colleagues, and they collected each other's work. Gertrude Fiske, Jane Peterson, and Ruth Anderson were Bourne's fellow members of both the North Shore Arts Association and the Boston chapter of the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors. It is apparent that Gertrude Bourne's summers on the North Shore provided not only subjects of interest for her paintings—in the form of marshes, townscapes, harbors, and gardens—but also supplied a community of artists with whom she maintained social and professional associations.

By the middle of the decade, Gertrude Bourne was apparently ready to resume her exhibition career in earnest, for 1915 marks the beginning of an active schedule which included, among others, showings at

galleries and museums in Essex County, Boston, New York, and Washington, D.C.. Bourne's first one-woman show took place in April 1915 at the Copley Society in Boston, where twenty-one works were exhibited, including *Birch Trees* (cat. no. 6). In 1917, Bourne participated in the exhibition at Gallery on the Moors in Gloucester, showing *A Cape Ann Garden* (cat. no. 8). This work, like its counterpart *Poppies*, (cat. no. 7) reveals the evolution of Bourne's painting style. Her loose brushstroke breaks up and animates the surface, providing a freedom to the work that contrasts with the controlled feeling of her early paintings. Organized by a diagonal recession into the picture, the composition creates an illusion of depth that differs from the essentially horizontal arrangement of her work from the 1890s. The colors chosen by Bourne tend to be more saturated than transparent, and her interest in rendering sunlight and shadow in the landscape is a motif that further develops in her work of the twenties. Bourne continued her Essex County affiliations, participating in shows at Gallery on the Moors in 1918, 1919, and 1921, and contributing her work to annual shows of the North Shore Arts Association from its founding in 1923 until 1928.

Bourne also carried on an active national



*Figure 3. The Lavender Door, ca. 1922 (cat. no. 18)*

exhibition schedule. In 1919, her work was included in group shows at the Art Institute of Chicago, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C. She became a member of the American Watercolor Society and the New York Watercolor Club, with which she exhibited works in New York over a thirty year period. The early twenties saw two more one-woman shows of Bourne's work, one at the Arts Club of Washington, D.C. and another at the Halcyon Gallery in London.

Several of the works that Bourne exhibited in Essex County galleries during the teens and twenties are included in the present exhibition. They demonstrate the artist's mature style, and also illustrate themes which occupied Bourne for much of her career. Views of North Shore towns, especially Ipswich, foreign and domestic harbors, and winter landscapes of Vermont and New Hampshire constitute a large proportion of the work produced by Bourne during the teens and twenties.

The series of paintings drawn from her years in Ipswich display Bourne's ability to capture in paint the different visual aspects of the village, from her staccato treatment of the foreground flowers in

*Garden and Harbor* (back cover) to the vibrant but rather transparent rendering of the marshes in *Pink Clouds, Hoag Island* (cat. no. 15). She also experimented with different versions of in-town views. *The Lavender Door* (fig. 3) has as its primary subject light and shadow as they fall on the white house, while both *Street in Ipswich* (fig. 2) and *Stone Bridge, Ipswich* (cat. no. 10) display an interest in providing a sense of the topography of the corner, with the hill rising sharply behind the river. *Stone Bridge, Ipswich*, exhibited at Gallery on the Moors in 1919, also represented Bourne in the show of Boston members of the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors held at the Grace Horne Gallery in February 1920. Essex County artists Ruth Anderson, Jean Oliver Nutting, and Mary B. Titcomb also participated in that exhibition.<sup>8</sup>

Of the three works in the present exhibition representing Bourne's Vermont landscapes, two were exhibited with the North Shore Arts Association. *Winter in Vermont* (cat. no. 23) was shown in 1925 and *A New England Church* (cat. no. 25) was included in the annual show of 1928, the last year in which Bourne belonged to NSAA. Bourne made painting excursions to Vermont and New Hampshire



during the winter and one particular occasion suggests something of the perseverance with which she approached her work. Philip Bourne recalls a year in which his mother made the trip to Newfane, Vermont, and upon arrival discovered that there was no lodging available to her. Rather than abandon her plan to paint in the town, she inquired at the local jail, and apparently was not only housed there, but found the accommodations satisfactory enough to stay for two weeks. There is no evidence that any of the Vermont works included in the present exhibition were painted during that stay in Newfane, but they do demonstrate Bourne's ability to capture colors of the winter landscape : the icy green of the brook, the lavender afternoon shadows cast upon a white New England church, and the subdued tones of a leafless Vermont hillside.

Harbors, the subject of Gertrude Bourne's earliest North Shore watercolors, continued to attract the artist, and the present exhibition includes three examples from Essex County from the 1920s: *Gloucester Harbor* (cat. no. 17), *The Wharf* (cat. no. 13), possibly also painted in Gloucester, and *North Shore Harbor* (cat. no. 14). Throughout the twenties, Gertrude Bourne went to Europe nearly every year,

and views of foreign cities and harbors are frequent subjects of her work. *Boats—Ragusa, Dalmatia* (fig. 4) painted on a excursion to Yugoslavia in 1924, is particularly skillful in its alternation of vibrant, opaque paint with areas of grey unpainted paper that define ropes and building surfaces. The Ragusa view was exhibited at the North Shore Arts Association in 1925. Bourne also executed a series of works at Concarneau, France, in 1923, in which the fleet of fishing boats forms a colorful, almost abstract frieze across the paper. (cat. no. 21) The harbor series in the present exhibition concludes with a pair of works from 1924, the tugboat on the Thames River, *Little Toot*, (fig. 5) with its view of St. Paul's Cathedral in the background, and *Morning Light, East River*, (fig. 6), a very impressionistic rendering of reflections on the water set against the pale New York skyline.

The late twenties mark the end of Bourne's thirty-year association with Essex County's art community, and thus also denote the latest date for work represented in the present exhibition. In the 1930s Bourne concentrated her exhibition efforts primarily in New York, Boston, and Washington, D.C., and traveled in the Caribbean, to the Cascade Mountains, and to the Southwest and Mexico.



*Figure 4. Boats—Ragusa, Dalmatia, 1924 (cat. no. 22)*

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During the late thirties Bourne made a trip to Hawaii, after which she exhibited her studies of exotic flowers at Doll and Richards Gallery in Boston. As the artist reached her seventies she continued to paint, but allowed her exhibition schedule to lighten. During the 1940s Bourne maintained her affiliations with the American Watercolor Society, with whom she last exhibited work in 1955, at the age of eighty-five.

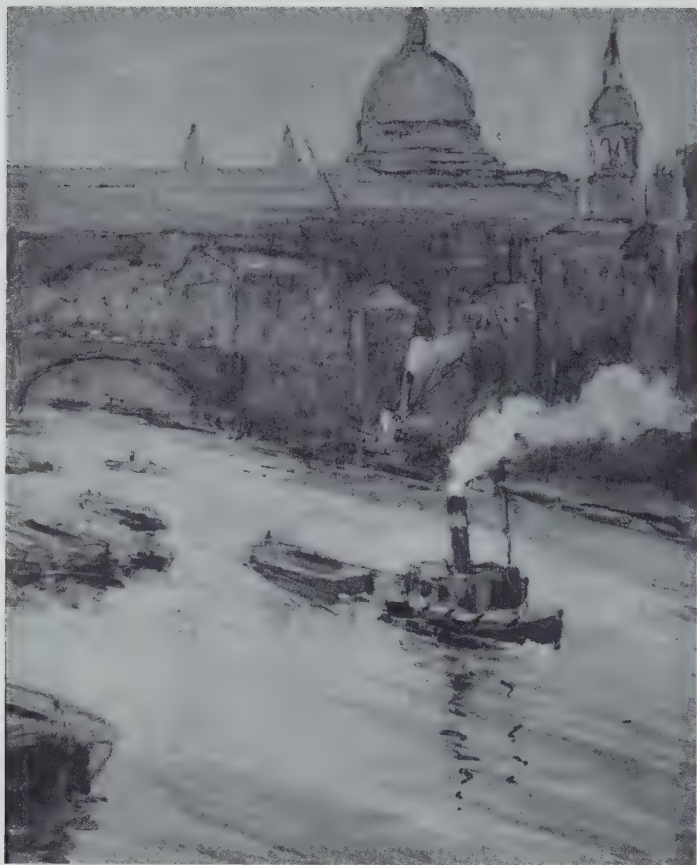
1870–1930 (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1985), 198–230.

8. Sidney C. Woodward, "Women Painters' and Sculptors' Work Shown," *Boston Post*, 4 Feb. 1920, 5

## Endnotes

1. Albert Ten Eyck Gardner, *History of Watercolor Painting in America* (New York: Reingold, 1966), 12
2. *Boston Art Club, By-Laws and Constitution* (1890), 2.
3. *Boston Art Club, Constitution and By-Laws* (1912): House rule 17 N. page.
4. *Boston Art Club Annual Exhibition Catalogues*, #41 to 62 (1890 to 1910).
5. Charlotte Streifer Rubinstein, *American Women Artists*, (Boston: G.K.Hall, 1982), 139.
6. William H. Gerdts. *American Impressionism*, (New York: Abbeville, 1984), 114.
7. Erica E. Hirschler, "Artists' Biographies," Trevor Fairbrother, *The Bostonians, Painters of an Elegant Age*





*Figure 5 Little Toot, 1923 (cat. no. 19)*



*Figure 6 Morning Light, East River, 1923 (cat. no. 20)*

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## Chronology

- 1867 Gertrude Beals born in Boston to Edith Ware Simmons Beals and Joshua Gardner Beals. The Beals family lived on Dartmouth Street in the Back Bay.
- 1880s Gertrude and brothers Sidney and Gardner traveled with their mother in Europe during the summers.
- 1885–1890 Gertrude began study of watercolor technique, first with Henry Rice, later with Henry B. Snell.
- 1892 At the Boston Art Club Gertrude Beals exhibited her work for the first time. She continued to participate in Boston Art Club shows, including those in 1893, 1895, 1898, 1900, 1903, 1905. Also included in these exhibitions were Winslow Homer, Childe Hassam, Maurice Prendergast, as well as Marie Danforth Page and Helen Knowlton.
- 1890s The Beals family summered in Nahant, and Gertrude did her first watercolors from Essex County.
- 1904 Beals marriage to architect Frank Augustus Bourne and move to Beacon Hill.
- 1907 Birth of son, Philip Walley Bourne.
- 1911–1912 The Bourne family began spending summers in Ipswich, where they rented a house from artist Arthur Wesley Dow.
- 1915 Gertrude Beals Bourne's first one-woman show held at Copley Society in Boston, an exhibition of twenty-one landscapes, all watercolor on paper. In the same year, Bourne first participated in the annual exhibitions of Washington Watercolor Club, at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., with which she continued to show regularly until 1937.
- 1917 Bourne first exhibited work in Essex County, at the newly opened Gallery on the Moors in Gloucester, where she showed the work *A Cape Ann Garden*. Bourne's work included in Gallery on the Moors exhibitions in 1918, 1919 and 1921.
- 1919 Bourne's *New England Church* included in group show at Art Institute of Chicago.
- 1920 Bourne served as secretary of the Boston chapter of the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors, with which she
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	exhibited <i>Stone Bridge, Ipswich</i> at the Grace Horne Gallery, Boston, in February.	1928	Bourne's work exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum, as part of National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors exhibition. Last year of Bourne's membership in NSAA.
1922	Bourne became a member of the American Watercolor Society and exhibited work with the association until 1955.	1929	Bourne founded the Beacon Hill Garden Club.
1923	Solo exhibition of Bourne's works held at the Arts Club of Washington, D.C. Bourne also exhibited work with the North Shore Arts Association in the organization's first annual show. Frank and Gertrude Bourne began spending summers in Europe, rather than on the North Shore, although Bourne continued her affiliation with the NSAA until 1928. During 1923, the Bournes traveled in Britain, Switzerland and France.	1930–1931	Frank and Gertrude Bourne traveled to Jamaica and Mexico, and to the Gaspé Peninsula in Canada. Water-colors from these trips were exhibited with the American Watercolor Society in New York, and at the Copley Society and the Boston Art Club.
		1938	Death of Frank Bourne.
1924	Traveled and painted in Yugoslavia, Italy, southern France.	1939	Solo exhibition of Bourne's work held at Doll and Richards Gallery, Boston, including landscapes from Bourne's trip to the Cascade Mountains.
1925	One woman show of Bourne's work held at Halcyon Gallery in London. <i>Ragusa Markets</i> exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. <i>Boats, Ragusa, Dalmatia</i> included in NSAA exhibition.	1940	Bourne's studies of Hawaiian flowers shown at Doll and Richards Gallery.
		1955	Bourne's last participation in American Watercolor Society exhibition, at age eighty-eight.
1927	Works from Bourne's 1927 travels in Morocco exhibited at the Boston Art Club.	1962	In May, death of Gertrude Beals Bourne in Boston, at age ninety-five. Burial at Mount Auburn Cemetary, Cambridge.

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## *Exhibition Checklist*

\*Unless otherwise noted, all works are in private collections.  
All works are watercolor on paper

1. Village Across the Water, ca. 1890  
11" x 17 3/4"
2. House on the Water, ca. 1892  
10 1/4" x 19 1/4"
3. Sailboats and Wharf, ca. 1895  
10 1/2" x 18 1/2"
4. Fall Harbor ca. 1895  
12" x 15 3/4"
5. Purple Azaleas, ca. 1905  
22" x 15 1/4"
6. Birch Trees, 1914  
20" x 15"  
Exhibited: Copley Society, Boston, 1915
7. Poppies, ca. 1916  
18" x 21 3/4"
8. A Cape Ann Garden ca. 1916  
20" x 22"  
Exhibited: Gallery on the Moors, Gloucester 1917  
New York Watercolor Club, 1917
9. Marshes through the Pines, ca. 1918  
21" x 15"
10. The Stone Bridge, Ipswich, 1918  
24 1/4" x 18 3/4"  
Exhibited: Gallery on the Moors, 1919 Grace Horne  
Gallery, Boston, 1920 with National  
Association of Women Painters and Sculptors  
Collection of Brockton Art Museum
11. Street in Ipswich, ca. 1918  
30" x 25"
12. Boat Dock at Ipswich, ca. 1918  
15 1/4" x 21 1/2"  
Collection of the Essex Institute.  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Bourne, 1987
13. The Wharf, ca. 1920  
19 3/4" x 25"
14. North Shore Harbor, ca. 1920  
19 1/2" x 23"
15. Pink Clouds, Hoag Island, ca. 1920  
20" x 26"

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| <p>16. Garden and Harbor, Ipswich, 1920<br/>20" x 26"</p> <p>17. Gloucester Harbor, ca. 1920<br/>20" x 25"</p> <p>18. The Lavender Door, ca. 1922<br/>20" x 25"<br/>Exhibited: Washington Watercolor Club,<br/>Washington, D.C., 1923<br/>Collection of the Essex Institute<br/>Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Bourne, 1987</p> <p>19. Little Toot, 1923<br/>20" x 26"</p> <p>20. Morning Light, East River, 1923<br/>26" x 20"<br/>Exhibited: American Watercolor Society<br/>and New York Watercolor Club, 1923</p> <p>21. Fishing Fleet, Concarneau, 1923<br/>20" x 26"</p> <p>22. Boats—Ragusa, Dalmatia, ca. 1924<br/>19 1/2" x 25 1/2"<br/>Exhibited: North Shore Arts Association,<br/>Gloucester, 1925</p> | <p>23. Winter in Vermont, 1925<br/>20" x 25 1/4"<br/>Exhibited: North Shore Arts Association,<br/>Gloucester, 1925; Baltimore Watercolor<br/>Club, 1926; Joint exhibition of New York<br/>Watercolor Club and American Watercolor<br/>Society (nd)</p> <p>24. The Brook, Wilton, 1927<br/>20" x 25"<br/>Exhibited: The Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C., 1928;<br/>American Watercolor Society<br/>Copley Society, 1929</p> <p>25. A New England Church, 1927<br/>27" x 20"<br/>Exhibited: North Shore Arts Association,<br/>Gloucester, 1927</p> |
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